

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ABU DH 01054 171135Z

12

ACTION NEA-10

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R 171005Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2937

INFO AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 1054

E.O. 11652: GDS - 1

TAGS: PINT, TC

SUBJ: SHAIKH RASHID COMMENTS ON NEW FEDERAL ARRANGEMENTS

REF: ABU DHABI 1041

1. DURING CONVERSATION IN DUBAI MAY 14 WITH UAE VICE PRESIDENT SHAIKH RASHID, WE CHATTED AT LENGTH ABOUT NEW ARRANGEMENTS STEMMING FROM RULERS MEETING ON MAY 12. RASHID SEEMED CHEERFUL AND REASONABLY SATISFIED WITH RESULTS WHICH, AS FAR AS WE CAN MAKE OUT, AMOUNTED TO COMPROMISE WHICH BASICALLY PRESERVES HIS OPTIONS.

2. ON MILITARY "UNIFICATION" (AS IT WAS BILLED IN ABU DHABI-CONTROLLED PRESS), RASHID MAINTAINED THAT NOTHING HAS BEEN AGREED TO, WHETHER "IN PRINCIPLE" OR ANYTHING BY SAGN BEYOND ASKING FOREIGN MILITARY EXPERTS TO COME IN TO STUDY SITUATION AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS. EXPERTS ARE TO COME FROM MOROCCO, JORDAN, SAUDI ARABIA AND EGYPT. (RASHID OMRCTED#THAT HE HAD PERSONALLY NOT

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PAGE 02 ABU DH 01054 171135Z

FAVORED HAVING EGYPTIANS INCLUDED BUT FOREIGN MINISTER SUWAIDI HAD INSISTED AND OTHER RULERS SUPPORTED HIM.) RASHID SAID BEFORE HE WOULD PROCEED WITH ANY MERGING OF FORCES HE WOULD LIKE QUESTION ADDRESSED AS TO WHY ANY FORCE IN UAE NEEDED KIND OF SOPHISTICATED AND EXPENSIVE WEAPONRY THAT ADDF WAS ACQUIRING. "AGAINST WHOM ARE WE GOING TO USE ALL THOSE MIRAGES?" RASHID SAID HE FAVORED ARMED FORCE FOR UAE THAT WAS SCALED AND EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH INTERNAL SECURITY, TO PATROL BORDERS, AND PREVENT INFILTRATION. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT SAY SO EXPLICITLY I HAD IMPRESSION RASHID SEES ADDF AS IT IS PRESENTLY OVER-ARMED AS PROVIDING THAT MUCH MORE OPPORTUNITY FOR AMBITIOUS ARMY OFFICERS TO KNOCK OFF REGIME.

3. SHAIKH RASHID ALSO MENTIONED THAT DURING UAE DELEGATION'S RECENT VISIT TO TEHRAN, SHAH HAD PROPOSED IDEA OF GULF SECURITY PACT THAT WOULD BE DESIGNED TO PROTECT AREA FROM "OUTSIDE AGGRESSION" AND RELIEVE SMALLER STATES FROM MAINTAINING UNREALISTICALLY LARGE DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENTS OF THEIR OWN. IN SPITE OF COMMENT ABOUT SELF-SERVING NATURE OF THIS PROPOSAL (HE OBVIOUSLY ASSUMED IRAN WOULD DOMINATE SUCH PACT), RASHID SEEMED TO RESPOND FAVORABLY TO IDEA, BUT HE ASKED RHETORICALLY "WHO COMES AFTER THE PRESENT SHAH--WE OUGHT NOT TO BASE OUR SECURITY ON THE LIFE OF ONE INDIVIDUAL."

4. SHAIKH RASHID LAUNCHED INTO PROLONGED MONOLOGUE ABOUT NEED FOR CHANGES IN ABU DHABI. HE COMMENTED THAT THERE ARE MORE "ADVISORS" THAN THERE ARE "EMPLOYEES" WORKING FOR FEDERAL MINISTRIES--AS RESULT NO REAL WORK GETS DONE. HE REITERATED HIS DISLIKE OF THE MANY FOREIGN (BY WHICH HE MEANS FOREIGN ARAB) ADVISORS THAT SHAIKH ZAYID DEPENDS ON.

"DO YOU KNOW THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LEVANTINES AND EGYPTIANS DOWN THERE? BOTH ARE CORRUPT BUT THE EGYPTIANS ARE INCOMPETENT AS WELL." HE CRITICIZED TOO FREQUENT WAGE AND ALLOWANCE HIKES FOR FEDERAL WORKERS, SAYING THIS WAS BECOMING GRAVY TRAIN WHICH WAS LEAVING POOR PEOPLE FARTHER AND FARTHER BEHIND IN THEIR LIVING STANDARD. HE DOES NOT THINK ABU DHABI'S SYSTEM FOR PROVIDING ELECTRICITY AND WATER FREE OF CHARGE TO PUBLIC MAKES ANY SENSE--"THE SHAIKHS GET ALL THE WATER AND THE POOR PEOPLE GET THE SHORTAGES." (IN DUBAI THESE SERVICES ARE PAID FOR, AND IT IS SHAIKH RASHID WHO IS MAJOR SHREHOLDER IN ELECTRICITY AND WATER DEPARTMENTS.) RASHID PRAISED

SHAIKH ZAYID BUT SAID HE PAYS NO ATTENTION TO DOMESTIC MATTERS. "HE
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ABU DH 01054 171135Z

IS THE LAST TO KNOW ANYTHING."

5. RASHID SEEMED TO APPROVE SUPREME COUNCIL DECISION TO STRENGTHEN CENTRALIZATION OF POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES. HE SAID POLICE WOULD REMAIN RESPONSIVE TO RULERS ON DAY-TO-DAY MATTERS BUT WOULD HENCEFORTH BE ENFORCING UNIFORM REGULATIONS UNDER DIRECTION OF FEDERAL
MINISTRY FOR IMMIGRATION AND CONTROL OF FOREIGNERS.

6. SHAIKH RASHID TOLD ME HE HAD AGREED TO CONTRIBUTE DH 350 MILLION THIS YEAR TO FEDERAL BUDGET, TO BE PAID IN QUARTERLY INSTALLMENTS. HE SAID THE SUM WOULD INCREASE NEXT YEAR. IN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION, HE SAID NEITHER SHARJAH NOR ANY OF OTHER EMIRATES WOULD BE CONTRIBUTING ANYTHING, NOT EVEN TOKEN AMOUNT.

7. COMMENT: IF OUR CALCULATION IS CORRECT THAT DUBAI'S REVENUE THIS YEAR CAN BE PROJECTED AT ABOUT \$600 MILLION, RASHID'S CONTRIBUTION IS ON ORDER OF 15 PERCENT OF HIS INCOME. WHILE THIS IS FAR SHORT OF 50 PERCENT PROPOSAL MADE BY SAQR, IT IS NO PALTRY SUM AND MUST HAVE BEEN VERY DIFFICULT PLUNGE FOR MAN WHO IS NOT KNOWN FOR GIVING HIS MONEY AWAY. RASHID WAS UNDER SOME DEGREE OF PRESSURE, BOTH FROM OTHER RULERS AND FROM ABU DHABI INSPIRED PRESS CAMPAIGN TO UNDERMINE HIS POSITION BY APPEALING TO PUBLIC FOR STRONGER FEDERATION. BUT WE DOUBT WHETHER THIS IN ITSELF WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT TO MAKE RASHID COME UP WITH CONTRIBUTION. THERE ARE RUMORS THAT RASHID GOT QUID PRO QUO IN FORM OF SPECIFIC PROMISES FROM ZAYID FOR CHANGES IN WAY THINGS ARE BEING DONE IN ABU DHABI. RASHID TOLD ME ONLY THAT HE HAD "DISCUSSED" HIS POINTS OF CRITICISM PRIVATELY WITH ZAYID ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS. IF DEAL WAS INDEED WORKED OUT (PROBABLY WITH FONMIN SUWAIDI AND MAHDI TAJIR ACTING AS GO-BETWEENS) IT MAY ONLY HAVE TAKEN FORM OF PROMISE THAT "ACTION" WOULD BE TAKEN ON VARIOUS FRONTS RASHID INDICATED. WHEN RASHID TOLD ME SUM OF HIS CONTRIBUTION, HE SEEMED TO STRESS FACT IT WOULD BE PAID IN QUARTERLY INSTALLMENTS, PERHAPS A HING THAT THEY MIGHT BE DELAYED IF PACE OF REFORM IN ABU DHABI LAGS. FURTHER QUESTION WHICH WE CANNOT YET ANSWER IS WHETHER NEW UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN ZAYID AND RASHID WILL BRING LATTER INTO MORE ACTIVE PERSONAL ROLE IN MANAGEMENT OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, OR WHETHER HE WILL CHOOSE TO REAMIN ALOOF UNTIL HE SEES WHETHER SITUATION IMPROVES IN CAPITAL CITY.

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PAGE 04 ABU DH 01054 171135Z

8. ON MILITARY UNIFICATION, WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SAQR AND RASHID HONESTLY SEE REDUCTION OF ADDF AS PREREQUISITE FOR MEGER OF FORCES, MOST SEASONED OBSERVERS HERE BELIEVE THIS, TOGETHER WILL CALL FOR "STUDY" BY FOREIGN EXPERTS, ARE DELAYING TACTICS ON PART OF THESE SHAIKHS WHO HAVE YET TO MAKE UP THEIR MINDS TO RELINQUISH THIS IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THEIR INDEPENDENT POSITION.
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